

PART 2036 - TRAVEL

Subpart A - Travel Regulations and Policies

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PART 2036 - TRAVEL

Subpart A - Travel Regulations and Policies

§ 2036.1 [Reserved].

§ 2036.2 General.

This Instruction states temporary duty (TDY) travel policies and procedures, issuance of Form AD-202, "Travel Authorization/Advance," and the approval of Form AD-616, "Travel Voucher." The Federal Travel Regulation (FTRs), Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR), and National Finance Center (NFC) Manuals are available in each Rural Development office. This Instruction supplements those regulations.

(a) Authority. The following Rural Development officials are responsible for authorizing TDY travel from allocated travel funds:

(1) Administrators may redelegate approval of travel for employees and others traveling to the employees' immediate supervisors.

(2) The respective Under Secretary for Rural Development; Administrators; Associate Administrators; Deputy Administrators; Assistant Administrators; designated National Office special approving officials (SAO); State Directors; Director, Centralized Servicing Center; or the Deputy Chief Financial Officer may approve travel involving actual subsistence.

(3) The following types of travel situations cannot be redelegated:

(i) The respective Administrators must approve premium-class other than first-class travel unless the use of frequent traveler benefits (FTBs) offset any additional costs.

(ii) The respective Administrators must approve travel for employees selected to travel to specific award ceremonies.

(iii) The respective Administrators must approve foreign travel outside the continental United States (OCONUS).

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(4) State Directors will be issued an annual Type N travel authorization for nationwide travel. The Support Services Division (SSD), Travel Unit (TU), will approve the annual Type N authorizations. The purpose and duration of the trip and person(s) to be seen must be given. Any travel outside the continental United States must be pre-approved by the Under Secretary for Rural Development for State Directors who are located in the continental United States.

(5) The Under Secretary, Rural Development, and respective Administrators and Deputy Administrators may issue nationwide travel (Type N) travel authorizations for specifically designated National Office Officials.

(6) State Directors; Deputy Chief Financial Officer; or Director, Centralized Servicing Center; and authorized officials in the National Office may issue limited open (Type B) and individual trip (Type C) Form AD-202 for all their employees except those noted in paragraphs (a)(3)(i) through (iii) of this section. This authority can be redelegated.

(b) Applicability. All Rural Development employees are subject to this Instruction unless an employee is detailed to or traveling for another Agency, in which case the paying Agency's regulations will govern. The Agency paying for the travel shall prepare and control travel documents; i.e., if a Farm Service Agency (FSA) employee is requested to travel for the Rural Housing Service (RHS) and will be reimbursed from RHS funds; then RHS will prepare and approve the Forms AD-202 and AD-616.

(c) General rules. Travelers will not authorize their own travel nor approve their own Form AD-616. The travelers' supervisors or other designated staff shall authorize Form AD-202 and approve Form AD-616 with the exception of:

(1) State Office Special Approving Official (SAO). The Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development can appoint SAOs in Rural Development State Offices to approve ONLY Form AD-616 for State Directors. State Directors will submit written requests for a SAO appointment to the SSD, TU. Appointments will be confirmed in writing and cannot be redelegated.

(2) No other SAO delegations to approve Form AD-616 will be issued in Rural Development field offices.

§ 2036.2 (Con.)

(d) Authorization of travel. The NFC online travel system must be used for authorizations and vouchers. Rural Development officials will authorize travel only when necessary to accomplish the mission and conduct operations in the most economical and effective manner and will:

(1) Consider alternatives to travel, such as video or teleconferencing.

(2) Authorize only the most economical means of travel considering transportation costs, seasonal per diem rates and salary expenses. The personal convenience or preference of the traveler will not be a determining factor.

(3) Assure travel funds are available.

(4) When possible, plan and schedule travel so employees will travel within their regular duty hours. Employees who regularly travel from their residence to a TDY station are expected to spend a reasonable amount of their own time commuting to the TDY station. The approving official will determine what a reasonable amount of time should be based on local conditions, but as a general rule, anything less than 1 hour will be considered reasonable.

(5) Advise all employees of their responsibility to be prudent and economic when performing official travel.

(e) Guidelines for issuing authorizations. Issue a Form AD-202 for official travel before travel begins unless the travel is an emergency.

(1) Types and uses of Form AD-202:

(i) Unlimited open authorizations (Type A) will be issued at the beginning of each fiscal year by the Under Secretary to Agency Administrators.

(ii) Nationwide authorizations (Type N) will be issued at the beginning of each fiscal year for the State Director and those individuals whose positions are designated yearly by Agency Administrators.

(iii) Limited open authorizations (Type B) will be issued at the beginning of each fiscal year to individuals required to perform frequent, routine travel within a work-related geographic area.

(iv) Trip-by-trip authorizations (Type C) will be issued to individuals or groups of individuals to take one or more specific trips that are identified as to purpose, itinerary, and estimated costs.

(v) Local travel authorizations (Type L) will be issued at the beginning of each fiscal year to employees to receive reimbursement for local travel; i.e., taxicabs, mileage, tolls, and parking.

(2) Issuing offices will assign unique numbers using the 13-position format as follows:

(i) First position is the last digit of fiscal year.

(ii) Second position is the type of authorization (B, C, N, etc.).

(iii) Third position is "S" for single traveler or "M" for multiple travelers.

(iv) Fourth and fifth positions are the agency code (either the employing agency or the agency paying the travel expenses).

(v) Sixth through ninth positions are alphanumeric codes unique to the agency.

(vi) Tenth through thirteenth positions are the 4-position sequential number.

(3) Purposes of travel. Purpose codes and statements are referenced in FTR Chapter 300-3, Glossary of Terms under "Travel Authorization (Orders)" and 301-71.103(c). Every Form AD-202 and AD-616 will contain a numeric purpose code and a brief description of the travel.

(4) Accounting classification codes. Authorizing officials shall use an approved accounting classification code. Classification codes are subject to change yearly.

(f) Special travel situations. Rural Development employees will follow guidance in ATR Chapter 301-1.104.

§ 2036.2 (Con.)

(g) Travel situations requiring special justification. Guidelines are outlined in ATR Chapter 301-1.105.

(1) Approving officials will obtain written justification from travelers on a case-by-case basis before approving travel when:

(i) Annual leave is requested. (Applies when the amount of leave during the trip is greater than one-half of the number of hours in the traveler's workday and the leave is before, during, or after official travel.)

(ii) The number of leave days exceeds the number of days of official business.

(iii) There are deviations for personal convenience from the authorized mode of transportation or itinerary.

(iv) Travel is to a resort area.

(2) The traveler will request and receive approval in writing from the authorizing official before the Form AD-202 is issued. The request will include the official itinerary, any deviations from the official itinerary or mode of transportation for personal travel or convenience, and a comparison of costs between the official travel itinerary and any deviations. Employees are not authorized to request personal travel through FedTraveler.com, or to combine personal and official travel through FedTraveler.com.

(3) Form AD-202 will show only the official travel, not any personal deviations. Leave should be noted in the remarks column on Form AD-202.

(4) The traveler will be financially responsible for all costs over the reimbursement limits. The traveler will be responsible for excess costs resulting from circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations or services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business. The traveler will not be paid per diem for any additional travel time incurred because of personal preference travel.

(5) The traveler shall not use any Government-contract carrier rates for personal portions of travel or use FedTraveler.com. All personal travel costs and arrangements shall be borne by the employee and paid with personal credit card, cash, or personal check.

§§ 2036.3 - 2036.9 [Reserved]

§ 2036.10 Transportation expenses.

Travelers and authorizing officials are responsible for selecting the mode of transportation most cost advantageous to the Government. Guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-10 and ATR Chapter 301-2.

(a) Common carrier transportation. Guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapters, 301-10.121 and 301-70.102 and ATR Chapters, 301-3.3 and 301-3.4.

(1) Contract air service. Travelers must use FedTraveler.com to reserve airline tickets and will use contract air carriers, (contract city pair) if such fares are available or unless use of non-contract airfare is justified and approved. Submit cost comparisons to authorizing officials prior to the approval of Form AD-202 and retain with official travel records.

(2) The Under Secretary for Rural Development will approve premium-class travel. Agency Administrators will approve premium-class other than first-class travel unless the use of FTBs offset any additional costs.

(3) Documentation requirements for use of first-class and premium-class are referenced in the ATR Chapter 301-3.3(d) (3) (ii).

(4) Rural Development will submit a report of the use of premium-class accommodations to the Department each year. Officials will send the required information to SSD, ATTN: TU, by September 30 of each year. Negative reports are required.

(5) Supersaver fares will be authorized only if the traveler has prepared a cost comparison, signed a waiver and submitted them to the authorizing official prior to approval of Form AD-202. Employees exchanging Government issued tickets for supersaver tickets (to schedule personal travel in conjunction with official travel) must pay all penalties if the trip is canceled for business or personal reasons. If official travel is canceled, the employee is responsible for reimbursing the full amount paid by the Government, including any penalties incurred. Attach the cost comparison and signed waiver to Form AD-202.

§ 2036.10(a) (Con.)

(6) All Rural Development travelers must obtain e-tickets and paper tickets (for international travel) through FedTraveler.com. International travelers will be reimbursed for any incurred paper ticket fees. If an unusual circumstance requires a paper ticket for domestic travel, a written justification must be submitted and approved by the official authorizing the travel prior to incurring a paper ticket fee. The justification and approval documents must be attached to the travel authorization and voucher and maintained in the official travel file for audit purposes.

(b) Government-owned vehicles (GOV). The use of GOVs for official transportation is generally advantageous to the Government. Employees who travel on a regular or intermittent basis are required to use a GOV if one is available. Rural Development employees will comply with RD Instruction 2018-G on the proper use of GOVs.

(1) Definitions which relate to the use of GOVs:

(i) Committed: Rural Development field employees complete a yearly mileage commitment form.

(ii) Assigned: The commitment form is used by management to assign a GOV to a high mileage driver or to an office.

(iii) Available: A GOV that is at the office and is not being used at the time the employee is scheduled to travel.

(2) Mileage reimbursements when a privately owned vehicle (POV) is used for personal preference instead of a GOV.

(i) An employee will receive 10.5 cents per mile when a GOV is available, the GOV is assigned to the office and the employee is committed to drive less than 12,000 miles a year.

(ii) An employee will receive the current authorized reimbursement rate when a GOV, which is assigned to the office is not available and the employee is committed to drive less than 12,000 miles a year.

(iii) An employee will receive 10.5 cents per mile if the employee is committed to drive more than 12,000 miles a year and is assigned a GOV.

(iv) An employee will receive 10.5 cents per mile when the employee is committed to drive more than 12,000 miles and no GOV has been assigned to the employee, but there is a GOV assigned to the office and available for use.

(v) An employee will receive 28.5 cents per mile in all situations if the employee has committed to drive more than 12,000 miles a year, and when a GOV is neither assigned nor available.

(c) Privately owned vehicle (POV) or other conveyances.

Guidelines and reimbursement rates are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-10, Subpart D and ATR Chapter 301-4. Use of a POV must be determined to be advantageous to the Government and specifically authorized.

(1) TDY travel mileage payments. Mileage rates include all costs incurred in the operation of a POV; i.e., insurance, gasoline, charges for repairs, towage, mechanical breakdowns, and depreciation of the POV. The traveler may be reimbursed for expenses such as parking fees, ferry fees, and bridge, road, and tunnel tolls.

(i) Mileage will be paid for official travel to a TDY point that begins and ends at the employee's regular official duty station. No mileage will be paid if it is more cost advantageous to take public transportation in metropolitan areas that have subway, bus, or other local transit available.

(ii) Mileage will be paid for official travel to a TDY point that begins and ends at the employee's residence. No mileage will be paid if it is more cost advantageous to take public transportation in metropolitan areas that have subway, bus, or other local transit available.

(iii) Mileage will be paid for the distance in excess of the normal commuting distance between the employee's residence and official duty station when TDY is performed en route from the residence to the official duty station or vice versa.

(iv) No mileage shall be paid between employee's residence and official duty station except for the day of departure and the day of return from travel that includes at least 1 night away from the official duty station.

§ 2036.10(c) (Con.)

(2) Local travel expenses. Reimbursement of local travel expenses will be paid to employees who travel between their residence and alternate duty point(s) in close proximity to the employee's permanent duty station; i.e., USDA Service Centers, hubs, or satellite offices, when the following conditions occur:

(i) The normal round trip POV commuting mileage is deducted; or

(ii) The daily round trip public transportation cost is deducted; or

(iii) The employee pays on a weekly or monthly basis to travel in a carpool or vanpool to the official duty station; or

(iv) The employee may claim all mileage and parking expenses in excess of the employee's normal daily commuting costs when the employee's supervisor determines and authorizes in advance and in writing that using a POV is cost effective to the Agency.

(3) Private planes. Employees may travel on official business by private planes when the authorization has been approved in advance and it is cost advantageous to the Government. Expenses to park, land, and tie-down fees will be reimbursed in addition to mileage.

(4) Private motorcycles. Employees may use private motorcycles for travel on official business under the same requirement as using POVs.

(5) Personal preference. Reimbursement is limited to the costs by approved method of transportation, constructive per diem allowance, and the usual transportation costs to and from the terminals. Leave shall be charged for additional travel time during normal working hours.

(d) Taxicabs. Use of taxicabs is permitted when more cost advantageous to the Government. Taxicab fare plus 15 percent tip will be allowed. Travelers should use courtesy transportation service furnished by hotels/motels to the maximum extent possible as a first source of transportation between a place of lodging at the TDY station and a common carrier terminal. Tips to courtesy transportation drivers are allowed and should be limited to one dollar.

(e) Commercially leased vehicles.

(1) Employees will be reimbursed for rental car expenses only when the rental car is advantageous to the Government and specifically authorized on Form AD-202. Employees are responsible for any additional cost resulting from the unauthorized use of a commercial rental automobile for other than official travel-related purposes.

(2) Employees will use FedTraveler.com to reserve rental cars.

(3) Employees will lease only sub-compact or compact cars unless a larger vehicle is justified and approved by the authorizing official.

(4) Since the Federal Government is self-insured, employees will not be reimbursed for the extra insurance options; i.e., collision damage waiver (CDW) or theft insurance.

§ 2036.11 Per diem expenses.

Guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-11 and ATR Chapter 301-7.

(a) Travel of less than 12 hours. Per diem shall not be authorized for travel of less than 12 hours.

(b) General rules on per diem within the vicinity of the official duty station.

(1) For travel within 1 calendar day. Per diem shall not be authorized when travel is conducted within a 25-mile radius of either the employee's official duty station or residence (the place from which the employee commutes daily to the official duty station).

(2) For travel of more than 1 calendar day. Per diem shall not be authorized when travel is conducted within a 35-mile radius of the employee's official duty station.

(c) Meals at the official duty station. Employees shall not be reimbursed for meals taken at the official duty station except if the meals are provided as part of:

(1) An official training session sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

§ 2036.11(c) (Con.)

(2) A formal meeting or conference that includes substantial functions that take place separate from the meal, the meal is incidental to the meeting and the employee is not free to take the meal elsewhere without missing essential formal discussions, lectures, or speeches concerning the purpose of the meeting.

(3) Generally, meals at agency-sponsored events are not reimbursable for employees whose official duty station is the same as the meeting site.

(d) Reductions to maximum per diem rates.

(1) Extended TDY. Per diem rates for employees on extended TDY will be as follows:

(i) Thirty days or less. The applicable maximum per diem rate (standard Continental United States (CONUS) or locality rate from FTR Chapter 301, Appendix A) will be paid to the employee for the first 30 calendar days.

(ii) More than 30 days. After the first 30 calendar days, generally, a per diem rate of 55 percent of the locality rate should be established for extended stays. If reduced lodging and/or meals cannot be obtained, a higher rate may be established as justified by anticipated costs. When the per diem rate is adjusted downward, the AD-202 must show the reduced rate. Unless arrangements are made prior to the start of travel, the traveler may be allowed full per diem until long-term accommodations can be found (usually no more than 30 days.) If the specific rate is not known at the time the AD-202 is prepared, state that an amended AD-202 will be issued authorizing a lower rate.

(iii) The employee must receive a written exception to the above rates from the authorizing official responsible for the extended TDY.

(2) Deductions from meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) when meals are provided. Refer to FTR Chapter 301-11.18 for specified amounts for each meal provided.

(3) Incidental expenses when meals and lodging are provided. When there is no charge to the employee for lodging or meals (i.e., lodging and meals are included in the cost of a meeting or training), the employee shall be authorized a flat M&IE rate of:

(i) \$5 per day for OPM-sponsored training held at residence facilities.

(ii) \$2 per day for all other instances.

(e) Interruptions of per diem entitlement.

(1) Indirect route or interrupted travel. An employee will not be paid extra per diem for extra travel time incurred at the sole convenience or personal preference of the employee due to a deviation from the most direct or usually traveled route. Per diem paid may not exceed that which would have been paid had the employee traveled by the contract carrier for the most direct or usually traveled route.

(2) Return to official duty station for nonworkdays. Employees may be authorized only per diem or actual expense and round-trip transportation expenses, for periodic return travel on non-workdays to their residence or official station when:

(i) The agency requires the employee to return to their official duty station to perform official business; or

(ii) The agency will realize a substantial cost savings by returning the employee to their residence; or

(iii) Periodic return travel to their residence is justified incident to an extended TDY assignment.

(A) When an employee voluntarily returns to the official duty station or residence for nonworkdays, the maximum reimbursement for round trip transportation and per diem or actual subsistence is limited to what would have been allowed had the employee remained at the TDY station. This travel must be completed outside regular duty hours.

(B) Employees who are on extended TDY assignments will be allowed to return to their official duty stations at intervals of not less than 2 weeks, provided that the TDY assignment will continue for at least 1 more full week after the return to the TDY station.

(C) Reimbursements of expenses in relation to extended TDY assignments exceeding 1 year in duration will be considered taxable income.

§ 2036.11(e) (Con.)

(3) Leave and nonworkdays.

(i) Taking leave or compensatory time for one-half, or less, of a workday has no effect on per diem entitlements.

(ii) When leave or compensatory time is for more than one-half of a workday, the employee is not entitled to per diem for that workday.

(iii) Any leave in excess of 4 hours will be noted on Forms AD-202 and AD-616.

(iv) Per diem will not be paid for a nonworkday when the employee is:

(A) In leave status both at the end of the workday before the nonworkday(s) and at the beginning of a workday following the nonworkday(s); e.g., Friday and Monday; and

(B) The period of leave on either workday (e.g., Friday or Monday) is more than one-half of the employee's regularly prescribed working hours for that day.

(f) Actual expenses. General guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-11, Subpart D and ATR Chapter 301-8.

(1) Maximum allowed. Actual subsistence reimbursements shall not exceed 300 percent of the locality's per diem rate.

(2) Approved in advance of travel. The respective Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development; Administrators; Associate Administrators; Deputy Administrators; Assistant Administrators; designated National Office SAOs; State Directors; Director, Centralized Servicing Center; or the Deputy Chief Financial Officer; must approve travel involving actual subsistence in advance of travel. The employee will prepare a written request for actual subsistence and must justify why actual subsistence is required. Attach the approved actual subsistence request to Form AD-202. It is the employee's responsibility to assure that every effort has been made to locate lodging within regular per diem rates. Employees must contact their FedTraveler.com to determine if the Government rate is available within the TDY location.

(3) Post approval. Post approval shall be limited to emergency situations. Actual subsistence shall not be post approved for expenses that could or should have been foreseen. The employee is responsible for determining total costs of hotels prior to requesting travel. Follow the request and approval procedures in paragraph (2) of this section for emergency situations.

(g) Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act requirements. Guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapters 300-3.1 and 301-11.

(1) Standards to meet the Act.

(i) Hotels three stories or lower must have hard-wired, single-station smoke detectors installed in each guestroom. Smoke detectors that are totally battery operated or those that have a cord that plugs into a wall outlet do not meet the Act.

(ii) Hotels more than three stories must have hard-wired, single-station smoke detectors PLUS an automatic sprinkler system installed in each guestroom.

(2) Compliance requirements.

(i) To ensure travelers stay in an approved facility, that meet the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act, all lodging arrangements must be made through FedTraveler.com who offers compliant and non-compliant hotels. When selecting a commercial lodging facility, first preference must be given to General Services Administration contracted facilities, unless a condition in FTR Chapter 301-50.6 exists.

(ii) Form AD-616 must contain an accounting of the total number of overnight accommodations that did and did not meet the requirements of the Act. Approving officials will ensure this data is annotated on Form AD-616.

§ 2036.12 Miscellaneous expenses.

General guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-12 and ATR Chapter 301-9.

(a) Lodging taxes. Taxes are limited to the reimbursable lodging costs, unless:

§ 2036.12(a) (Con.)

(1) Exempted by the state or local jurisdiction. Exemptions from taxes for Rural Development travelers, and the forms required to claim them, vary from location to location. The General Services Administration's (GSA) Homepage can be found at <http://GSA.gov>. Select "Services" from the top menu and click on "Travel."

(2) Lodging costs are paid directly by the Government to the hotel vendor; i.e., Government purchase order.

(b) Reimbursable fees. Fees for FedTraveler.com transactions and automated teller machine (ATM) withdrawals and travelers checks are reimbursable.

(c) Authorized telephone calls. Refer to FTR Chapter 301-12.1 and Departmental Regulations (DR) 2300-3 and 3300-001 for detailed guidelines regarding telephone calls. Following are two methods of telephone reimbursement:

(1) Whenever possible, the Government telephone system must be used. The Government telephone system includes the Government calling cards and Government pre-paid debit cards. Government calling cards will be issued to frequent travelers. Infrequent travelers will be issued pre-paid debit cards. The Designated Agency Representative (DAR) shall issue both cards. For telephone usage follow the guidelines in DR 3300-001.

(2) The commercial telephone system will be allowed following the guidelines in DR 2300-3.

(d) Laundry, pressing clothes, etc. Refer to FTR Chapter 301-11.31. Expenses for laundry, dry cleaning and pressing of clothes at the CONUS only TDY location are reimbursable when the following requirements are met:

(1) The traveler must incur 4 or more consecutive nights of lodging on official travel.

(2) A receipt, from the facility at the TDY site, must be provided to substantiate the claim.

(3) The cost of the cleaning must be reasonable, as determined by the approving official.

(e) Receipt requirements. Receipts are required for any individual expense over \$75.

§ 2036.13 Travel of an employee with special needs.

- (a) General guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapters 300-3 and 301-13.
- (b) Medical documentation should be substantiated in writing and updated annually.

§§ 2036.14 - 2036.29 [Reserved]

§ 2036.30 Emergency travel of employee due to illness or injury or a personal emergency situation.

General guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-30 and ATR Chapter 301-12.

- (a) Employee responsibility and documentation. As soon as an employee is incapacitated by illness or informed of an emergency situation that necessitates discontinuance or interruption of the TDY assignment, the employee will contact their immediate supervisor for instruction.
- (b) Incapacitating illness or injury of employee. The illness or injury may occur while the employee is at, or en route to or from, a TDY location. In the case of illness or injury of the employee, the employee must seek medical services at the nearest hospital or medical facility capable of treatment of the illness or injury.
- (c) Family emergencies, illnesses, or injuries. When approval for travel is authorized, a separate travel authorization will be prepared specifying the circumstances that caused the emergency travel and the extent to which the Government will reimburse the employee. The claim for emergency travel expenses will be on a travel voucher separate from the one prepared for the official travel that was interrupted due to illness or personal emergency.

§§ 2036.31 - 2036.49 [Reserved]

§ 2036.50 Arranging for travel services.

General guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapters 301.50 and 301.73 and ATR Chapter 301.15. Rural Development employees must use FedTraveler.com for official travel. Rural Development employees will be responsible for any additional costs that result from the use of an unauthorized travel agent or travel management system. If the GSA city-pair fare contract for passenger transportation services is available, Rural Development employees must use the contract carrier for their official Government travel.

§ 2036.51 Paying travel expenses.

General guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-51 and ATR Chapter 301-10. Employees must use their Government-issued travel charge card to pay for reimbursable travel expenses; i.e., commercial transportation, lodging, rental cars. Employees who are not eligible for a Government-issued travel charge card must use either the Centrally Billed Account (CBA) through the National office. Use of other forms of payment for commercial transportation will not be reimbursed.

(a) FedTraveler.com. All employees who travel will be authorized to use FedTraveler.com. Employees are asked to book their airline, hotel and car rental through the online booking tool. (FTR 301-50.3) The FedTraveler.com online booking Quick Reference Guide is available at <http://www.nfc.usda.gov/corporate/ets.htm>.

(b) Centrally Billed Account (CBA). The CBA used by FedTraveler.com to directly bill the Agency for commercial transportation for those employees who do not have Government charge cards. (An AD-202 must be faxed to the TU).

(c) Government charge cards. All permanent employees who travel at least twice a year must participate in the Government travel charge card program. Supervisors must counsel employees on appropriate use of the card and must certify new applications for travel charge cards. The following are exceptions to the mandatory issuance of the travel charge card:

- (1) New employees required to perform TDY travel en route to their first post of duty.
- (2) An employee who had the card canceled by the issuing bank.
- (3) Intermittent/seasonal employees and those expected to travel less than twice a year.
- (4) Employees with issues concerning credit with the Government vendor; e.g., past or present credit problems or issues.
- (5) Travelers who do not have a Government travel charge card and must perform official travel should begin utilizing Fedtraveler.com. A signed copy of the travel authorization must be faxed prior to travel to the National Office for approval.

(d) Responsibilities of Agency/Organization Program Coordinators (A/OPCs) in State, St. Louis, and National Offices for administering the program:

- (1) Provide instructions and blank applications to employees who qualify for the charge card.
- (2) Review charge card applications for completeness, including certification by the applicant's supervisor.
- (3) Return charge card applications to applicant's supervisor if not certified.
- (4) Review and monitor usage reports for potential abuse, misuse, or delinquency of payments. Contact supervisors and Human Resources when accounts become 60 days past due.
- (5) Contact employees and their supervisors if potential abuse or misuse is suspected.
- (6) Reduce and monitor travel advances for eligible employees.
- (7) Promptly report to the SSD, TU, any problems with the charge card.
- (8) Ensure the charge card is canceled when an employee leaves, retires, or transfers to another agency.

(e) Responsibilities of employees who have been issued a travel charge card:

- (1) Mandatory use of the charge card for expenses incurred in connection with only official travel away from the duty station; i.e., commercial transportation, authorized car rental, and lodging. Personal items that are not reimbursable as official expenses may not be purchased using the charge card. Employees who use the charge card for inappropriate or non-official purposes will be subject to disciplinary action.
- (2) Expenses exempt from mandatory use of the travel charge card are:
 - (i) Out-of-pocket expenses; e.g., laundry/dry cleaning, parking, tolls, telephone calls, local transportation systems, taxicabs, tips; and

§ 2036.51(e) (2) (Con.)

(ii) Expenses covered by the M&IE portion of the Federal per diem allowance.

(3) Pay all valid bills in full by the due date shown on the billing statement. Cardholders are responsible for resolving billing problems.

(4) Safeguard the charge card.

(5) Notify the charge card company and A/OPC promptly if the card is lost, stolen, or for name and address changes.

(6) Return the card to the respective A/OPC or immediate supervisor when employee is reassigned to another organization or when employment is terminated.

(f) Automated Teller Machine (ATM) program. The ATM program is the primary method for obtaining cash advances for Rural Development employees who have been issued the Government travel charge card. However, participation is not mandatory. Employees whose accounts are in arrears or who have misused their travel charge card may be denied access. Surcharge and service fees for usage are reimbursable as a miscellaneous expense on the travel voucher. Cash advances are limited to a maximum of \$50 per day and a maximum of \$375 per week. Weekly limit for international travel is \$1,021. Cash obtained from the ATM in amounts greater than required for the duration are considered excessive cash advances. Cash advances should be made as close as possible to the actual beginning of travel. Cash advances may never be used to procure common carrier transportation tickets; i.e., air, rail or bus. Acquiring cash advances for any purpose other than official travel expenses may result in disciplinary action.

(g) Travel advances. Employees who have not been issued the Government travel charge card may obtain eighty percent of an advance of funds for out-of-pocket expenses using an AD-202. General guidelines for out-of-pocket expenses are in FTR Chapter 301-51.200, Subpart C. The NFC Travel Advance System will be used only as a backup cash advance system for Rural Development.

§ 2036.52 Claiming reimbursement.

General guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-52 and ATR Chapter 301-11.

- (a) Receipt requirements. Receipts are required for all expenses plus any applicable tax over \$75. Receipts are required for lodging, laundry (CONUS only) and common carrier transportation (plane, train, bus, car rental) regardless of the amount.
- (b) Original signatures required. The Rural Development mission area is authorized to use NFC's computer-generated Form AD-616 for reimbursement of travel expenses. The computer-generated Form AD-616 that is maintained in the traveler's official file must have original (not photocopied or faxed) signatures of both the claimant and the approving official.
- (c) Approval. No one may approve his or her own Form AD-616. Persons delegated as SAOs in each Rural Development State Office and St. Louis may approve Form AD-616.
- (d) Fraudulent claims. False or fraudulent claims will result in forfeiture of the claim. In addition, the employee is also subject to potential disciplinary action and criminal provisions under which severe penalties may be imposed.

§ 2036.53 Using promotional materials and frequent traveler programs.

- (a) General guidelines are outlined in FTR 301-53 and ATR Chapter 301-1.103.
- (b) Frequent traveler benefits (FTBs) programs.
 - (1) Rural Development employees participating in FTB programs may retain promotional items received incident to official travel, including frequent flyer miles, for personal use. These items must have been obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public and at no additional cost to the Government. Employees are responsible for establishing their FTB accounts. Any associated costs, including taxes, will be paid by the employee and are not reimbursable expenses. Employees may redeem their FTBs to purchase personal travel or upgrade official travel, at no additional cost to the Government, without prior approval.
 - (2) All Rural Development employees will follow FTR Chapters 301-10.123 and 301-10.124 governing upgrades to premium airline accommodations which will be paid for by Rural Development. Rural Development will not pay for any upgrades unless one of the exceptions listed have been met.

§§ 2036.54 - 2036.72 [Reserved]

§ 2036.73 Travel programs.

Guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapters 301-50 and 301-73 and ATR Chapter 301-15. Rural Development employees must use FedTraveler.com for official travel.

§ 2036.74 Conference planning.

Guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 301-74 and ATR Chapter 301-16.

(a) Compliance requirement. When Rural Development sponsors or funds, in whole or in part, a conference at a place of public accommodation in the U.S., Rural Development must use a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved accommodation. This provision also applies to the Government of the District of Columbia only when it expends Federal funds for a conference and to a non-Federal entity to which Government funds are provided for the conference.

(b) Waivers.

(1) Rural Development must make a written determination on an individual case basis that a waiver of the requirement to use FEMA approved accommodations is necessary in the public interest for a particular event.

(2) Obtain waivers prior to any commitment to a hotel or motel on behalf of the Agency. Submit requests for exceptions at least 2 months prior to the meeting, conference, etc., to the SSD, TU. Requests will include:

Date(s) the overnight accommodations are needed;

Number of attendees;

Purpose of meeting, conference, etc.;

Other contacts or inquiries made concerning availability of approved accommodations; i.e., change of date, change of city location, etc.; and,

Estimated cost of meeting.

§§ 2036.75 - 2036.79 [Reserved]

§ 2036.80 Foreign travel.

General guidelines are outlined in ATR Chapter 301-18.

(a) Politically appointed officials. All foreign travel by politically appointed officials of the Department, including Presidential appointees, members of the non-career Senior Executive Service, and Schedule C employees, must be approved by the Office of the Secretary.

(1) The original request from the traveler in the form of a decision memorandum will be submitted to the SSD, TU, at least 4 weeks prior to the proposed trip.

(2) The SSD, TU, will submit the request to the Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development for review and approval/disapproval.

(3) Once approval is received, the SSD, TU, will work with the traveler to complete and submit the necessary paperwork to obtain passports or visas for the proposed trip.

(b) Delegations or individual career employees. All foreign travel by delegations or individual career employees must be approved by the appropriate Agency Administrator and Under Secretary for Rural Development.

(1) The original request from the traveler in the form of a justification for foreign travel will be submitted to the SSD, TU, at least 4 weeks prior to the proposed trip.

(2) The SSD, TU, will submit the request to the appropriate agency Administrator and Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development for review and approval/disapproval.

(3) Once approval is received, the SSD, TU, will work with the traveler to complete and submit the necessary paperwork to obtain passports or visas for the proposed trip.

§ 2036.81 Payment of expenses connected with the death of certain employees.

Guidelines are outlined in FTR Chapter 303.

(a) General procedures.

(1) An Agency representative will notify the family of the death and explain what costs the agency will pay.

§ 2036.81(a) (Con.)

- (2) Generally, the family of the deceased will make the funeral arrangements and the agency will reimburse the funeral director for the preparation and transportation of the remains.
- (3) Allow the family to choose the funeral director that will make the necessary arrangements. The funeral director will coordinate these arrangements with a funeral director at the TDY site.
- (4) The funeral director should prepare a separate bill for the services, itemizing only those costs the Government will pay.
- (5) The agency will prepare an itemized list of those items of the bill payable to the funeral director. The expenses should be paid promptly. The agency will inform the family of all actions taken.
- (6) The applicable office submits the itemized list to the certifying official for processing. The certifying official prepares Form AD-757, "Miscellaneous Payment System," which is sent to the NFC for processing.

(b) When deceased employee's agency must make the arrangements. The procedures for the preparation and transportation of the remains include preparing a Form AD-202, or an amendment to the deceased employee's existing authorization. The Form AD-202 and the AD-616 must be prepared and processed through the Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS) with an assigned travel related payment voucher. Payment expenses, along with death-related expenses are authorized at the time of death, according to the FTR 303-70.

§ 2036.82 Travel allowances for Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignees.

(a) Responsibility for IPA agreements and related paperwork. Human Resources will work with individual IPA assignees. Guidelines are outlined in ATR Chapter 301-19.

(b) Travel allowances. Form AD-202 must be issued before the start of the assignment and must specify exactly the approved travel allowances.

§§ 2036.83 - 2036.99 [Reserved]

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